



MEMORIAL CLEANING POLICY

Date Ratified:	11 June 2024
Meeting:	Finance and General Purpose Committee
Next review date:	2027 (3 yearly review)

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

Thornbury Town Council recognises that owners of grave plots in Thornbury Cemetery may wish to keep their memorials clean by employing external memorial cleaning contractors.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that a procedure is in place that allows plot owners to have their memorial masonry cleaned by external providers. This procedure considers the health and safety of staff and visitors to Thornbury Cemetery, the effect that cleaning may have on the memorial masonry and to support the Town Council's Climate and Nature Action Plan by allowing only environmentally friendly products in its green spaces.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff of the Town Council, all plot owners wishing to employ an external provider to clean the memorial masonry on their grave plot and all external providers wishing to apply for a permit to clean the memorial masonry on a grave plot in Thornbury Cemetery.

3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy has been written broadly in line with BRAMM's Cleaning of Memorials in Cemeteries, best practice guidance notes and is attached (see Appendix 1).

Grave owners should fully consider the implications of cleaning a memorial including the risk of damage for example the gilding of the lettering may be scratched or the surface of the stone could be abraded.

If the memorial is under a guarantee period from the memorial mason who installed it, the owner should check that their cleaning methodology or that of a company will not affect the guarantee. The Town Council accepts no liability if a guarantee is affected following commercial cleaning of a memorial.

If a grave owner does employ an external provider to clean the memorial masonry on their plot, the contract is between the owner and the company they employ. The Town Council accepts no liability whatsoever for any damage caused whilst cleaning memorial masonry.

External cleaning providers should complete an Application for Permission to Undertake Commercial Cleaning at Thornbury Cemetery (see Appendix 2) which **must** also be signed by the grave owner. (In cases where the owner is deceased, a plot transfer will be required before a permit can be granted.) No application for cleaning will be considered without the owner's signature.

Cleaning companies must supply a copy of their public liability insurance, risk assessment and cleaning methodology with their application.

No harsh chemicals, pesticides or potentially damaging mechanical methods of cleaning, for example household cleaners, bleach or power washing tools, are allowed in Thornbury Cemetery, in any circumstance.

Once the application and relevant documents have been received and the correct fee paid, the Town Council will issue a permit to allow the cleaning. The permit is valid for one year from the date of issue during which multiple visits can be made to clean the memorial masonry.

Should an external memorial cleaning contractor wish to clean more than one memorial during a visit to Thornbury Cemetery, the Town Council must have received a separate application form, and a permit have been issued, for each memorial cleaned.

No commercial cleaning must be undertaken in Thornbury Cemetery without a permit.

APPENDIX 1

Cleaning of memorials in cemeteries

Best practice guidance note

This note has been produced by BRAMM to assist burial authorities and companies in managing how memorials are cleaned in their cemeteries.

To clean or not to clean

Burial authorities are advised to provide guidance to grave owners/members of the public regarding how best to clean a memorial. A starting point should be whether the memorial actually needs cleaning or not. This is because every time that a memorial is cleaned, there is a risk that it could be damaged, for example the gilding of the lettering may be scratched, or the surface of the stone could be abraded. Some stone types become darker with age and exposure to the elements. This is a natural process, and trying to reverse it through harsh cleaning could cause damage to the surface of the stone.

If cleaning is required, gentle is best. Plenty of water and soft cloths, or wooden or plastic scrapers for some types of stone are the preferred tools to use. Harsh chemicals should be avoided, as should wire brushes or other abrasives, as these can cause damage to the memorial and surrounding area. High pressure jet washing should be very carefully considered, as it may not be the most appropriate method of cleaning a headstone, especially older ones that may have cracks in them or where the face of the stone is delaminating. High pressure washing can also erode joints, which then permits the ingress of water and could result in the failure of joints via freeze/thaw action, making the memorial unstable. Substantial damage could be caused to a memorial and surrounding area by using this cleaning technique.

Preparation

Burial authorities and companies should advise grave owners/members of the public to be cautious before undertaking any memorial cleaning themselves. The memorial should be tested for stability before any work is carried out. The burial authority or company could offer to do this testing (and may wish to charge a fee to cover their costs) or the grave owner/member of the public could appoint their own suitably experienced or qualified contractor, for example a memorial mason.

Guidance

Guidance on the best way to clean memorials can be found at:

[How to Properly Clean a Headstone in 8 Steps | Cake Blog | Cake: Create a Free End of Life Plan \(joincake.com\)](#)

[Cleaning Gravestones- How should it be done? | Stoneletters](#)

[How to Properly Clean and Care for a Gravestone \(wikihow.com\)](#)

The National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Code of Working Practice ([ShowDocument \(namm.org.uk\)](#)) contains a section on cleaning memorials (Section 17). This advice is aimed at memorial masons rather than members of the public. Burial authorities and companies need to consider whether the use of chemicals to clean memorials as outlined in this section would be permitted in their burial grounds, as this may be contrary to broader environmental management aims.

Permission and permits

Ideally any substantial cleaning of a memorial (ie anything other than a simple wipe over) should only be carried out with the permission of the grave owner. The owner of a grave, or family member or friend

nominated by them, can carry out cleaning themselves, but they are advised to follow relevant guidance to ensure this is done safely and without causing further damage to the memorial.

If the memorial is under a guarantee period from the memorial mason who installed it, the owner should check with them that their cleaning methodology will not affect the guarantee.

If the grave owner wishes to use a company to clean the memorial for them, the burial authority should insist that a memorial permit application form is completed, showing the consent of the grave owner and the details of who is to undertake the work and how. If the grave owner is deceased, the burial authority/company may require a transfer of ownership to take place before it can allow any work to take place on the memorial.

Before issuing a memorial permit for the cleaning to go ahead, the burial authority should ensure that the company undertaking the work has adequate public liability insurance (advice on the amount required should be sought from the authority/company insurers). The company undertaking the work should also be asked for their safe working practice and methodology used for cleaning the memorial, and a relevant risk assessment. If chemicals are to be used in the cleaning process, the burial authority or company should ask for a data sheet and risk assessment for the chemicals. If the company is registered with BRAMM or is on the NAMM Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF) you can check their insurance details on the relevant register website. You should, however, still ask for their cleaning methodology and a risk assessment.

The burial authority/company should check that the proposed methodology fits with their own regulations for the management of the cemetery, especially the use of chemicals or potentially damaging mechanical methods of cleaning. They should also check that the permission of the grave owner has been given. If the burial authority/company is satisfied that all is in order, they may issue the permit to the company undertaking the work. The burial authority can decide if they wish to make a charge for issuing such a permit.

Renovation

Substantial renovation Work that involves anything other than cleaning, eg refixing part or all of the memorial, must only be undertaken by suitably qualified memorial masons and in line with the current British Standard 8415

APPENDIX 2



APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE COMMERCIAL CLEANING OF A MEMORIAL AT THORNBURY CEMETERY

This form is to be completed and forwarded to the Cemetery Administrator at Thornbury Town Council. Upon receipt of the completed application, the applicant will receive an invoice which must be paid before the permit can be issued. Fees can be found on our website or requested by either emailing info@thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk or telephoning 01454 412103.

Tradespeople working at the cemetery must produce the permit on arrival.

Permits for cleaning only will be valid for one year from date of issue. Multiple visits to clean a memorial can be made during this period.

Please issue a permit for commercial cleaning to be carried out to the memorial masonry on:

Grave No:Deceased's Name: at Thornbury Cemetery as hereunder stated.

Description and type of memorial masonry:

TO BE READ AND SIGNED BY THE MEMORIAL MASON/MEMORIAL CLEANING COMPANY CARRYING OUT THE WORK:

I have been instructed to carry out memorial cleaning work. A valid public liability insurance certificate, COSHH sheets for the chemicals to be used and a risk assessment for the work to be carried out are submitted with this form. The owner of the headstone, or person instructing the work under a statutory declaration has also been sent these.

I understand that I am liable for any damage to Cemetery property, to the memorial and to surrounding memorials, turf etc caused by negligence of myself, my workmen and/or any subcontractor employed by me.

I have public liability insurance to the value of £5,000,000 (please supply certificate).

I agree to remove all unused materials/rubbish on the day the work is undertaken and leave the area in a neat and tidy state.

I will not work, in the same or adjacent section of the cemetery, while a funeral is in progress.

Before I commence work and on leaving the job, I will test the stability, safety and the condition of the masonry, and confirm I am competent to do so. Memorials must not be left in an unsafe condition. Any emergency works to make safe, or concerns over a headstone's condition, must be reported to a member of staff.

I understand that I can only work during the opening hours of the cemetery, which are 8:30am-4:30pm Monday – Friday, however, inspections and site visits may be undertaken outside of these hours.

I hereby indemnify Thornbury Town Council and all its officers and servants from any liability whatsoever in this matter or arising thereof. I hereby declare to be legally bound by the rules and regulations and any further amendments as result of legislative or policy changes. I am aware of the Council's Information and Data Protection Policy which can be found on their website at www.thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk.

Work must not commence until a work permit has been granted by the Town Council.

Company's Name Email:

.....

Address including postcode

..... Signature:

..... Print Name: Date:

PTO

(For office use only)

Deed No: Plot No: Fee: Invoice No:

Date Permit Issued: Permit Number: Receipt:

Signature(s) of the registered Grave Owner(s): (if more than 2 owners, please sign and attach an additional consent form.)

Print Name: Print Name:

Signature: Signature:

Address: Address:

Date: Date:

PLEASE NOTE: Only the owner of the grave, their representatives (with written consent), or other party with relevant statutory declaration, signed by a Magistrate or Commissioner of Oaths can instruct a mason/commercial cleaner to apply for a work permit.

If the registered owner of the grave is deceased, a transfer of ownership may be required before the permit can be issued. Applicants should contact Thornbury Town Council for any plot transfer enquiries. Thornbury Town Council can only transfer plots to those 'legally entitled' to them.

PERMIT AND TRANSFER FEES APPLY – Please see our website for a list of fees and charges or email info@thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk.